

Message Text

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13
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 /072 W
----- 102401

R 241021Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY BAMA KO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4538
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS : PINT, ML
SUBJECT: LET THEM EAT (MOLDY) BREAD

1. BREAD LOAVES IN BAMA KO HAVE TURNED FROM CRUSTY AND WHITE TO TOUGH, SMELLY AND BROWN. THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF RELIEF ACTIVITIES, HAS DECIDED TO FORCE THE SALE OF OLD FLOUR LEFT OVER FROM THE DROUGHT RELIEF PERIOD. THIS EMBASSY HAS LEARNED, HOWEVER, THAT THE MINISTER'S PREVIOUSLY UNCHALLENGED AUTHORITY IN THIS AREA HAS NOW BEEN QUESTIONED. BETTER LOAVES ARE IN SIGHT.

2. THE BREAD CRISIS AROSE WHEN LOCAL BAKERS SECURED IMPORT LICENSES FOR NEW FLOUR FROM THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ONLY TO HAVE THESE LICENSES BLOCKED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. NO FLOUR COULD BE IMPORTED, SAID THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, UNTIL STOCKS OF FLOUR DONATED BY GERMANY AND CANADA TO CREATE DROUGHT RELIEF COUNTERPART FUNDS HAD BEEN SOLD. BAMA KO BAKERS SAID

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THE FLOUR WAS SPOILED BUT AGREED TO ABSORB THE 1,200

TONS THEN STOCKED IN BAMAKO BY MIXING IT WITH GOOD FLOUR AT A RATIO OF 25/75 BAD TO GOOD.

3. THE RESULT HAS BEEN A CULINARY AND POLITICAL DISASTER. NO SOONER HAD BAKERS AGREED TO PURCHASE THE OLD FLOUR THAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE BEGAN TRUCKING IN ADDITIONAL STOCKS FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE COUNTRY. STOCKS PRESENTLY IN BAMAKO MAY HAVE REACHED 5,000 TONS. THE BAKERS HAD THE FLOUR BUT THE BREAD THEY BAKED WAS HARDLY EDIBLE. A GROUNDSWELL OF PROTESTS AROSE AMONG THE URBAN POPULACE, THE CORNERSTONE OF THE RULING MILITAV COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION'S POWER BASE.

4. A HIGH GOM OFFICIAL RECENTLY TOLD AIDOFF THAT THE PRESIDENCY HAD HAD TO OVERRIDE SOME OF THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE'S RECENT DECISIONS ON FLOUR. BECAUSE OF THE AUTHORITY HE WIELDED AS HEAD OF DROUGHT RELIEF, MINISTER DOUKARA HAS BEEN CONSIDERED MALI'S MOST POWERFUL PERSONARDTY. THE DROUGHT IS OVER, HOWEVER, AND THE GOVERNMENT IS APPARENTLY LESS PATIENT WITH DOUKARA'S HIGH HANDED MEHTODS, ESPECIALLY SINCE HIS RECENT DECISIONS UNDERMINE THE INFLUENCE OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE.

5. THE BAKERS HAVE YET TO HEAR OF ANY CHANGE IN REGULATIONS AND ARE PLAYING BY THEIR OWN RULES. ALTHOUGH MOST BAKERS HAVE SOME STOCKS OF OLD FLOUR, THEY ARE BAKING WITH THE OLD FLOUR AND REFUSING TO SELL THE HIGHER PRICED WHITE BREAD LOAVES. GOOD BREAD IS AVAILABLE IN SEGOU, KOULIKORO AND SIKASSO. BUT IN BAMAKO THE BREAD IS STILL BROWN AND PUBLIC DISCONTENT GROWS WHILE THE GOVERNMENT DECIDES WHO CONTROLS THE MARKET.

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